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ar·bi·trar·y [ahr-bi-trer-ee] [Pronunciation Key](#) - [Show IPA Pronunciation](#)
adjective, noun, plural -trar·ies.

-adjective

1. subject to individual will or judgment without restriction; contingent solely upon one's discretion: *an arbitrary decision.*
2. decided by a judge or arbiter rather than by a law or statute.
3. having unlimited power; uncontrolled or unrestricted by law; despotic; tyrannical: *an arbitrary government.*
4. capricious; unreasonable; unsupported: *an arbitrary demand for payment.*
5. *Mathematics.* undetermined; not assigned a specific value: *an arbitrary constant.*

-noun

6. *arbitraries, Printing.* (in Britain) [PECULIAR](#) (def. 9).

[Origin: 1400-50; late ME < L *arbitrarius* uncertain (i.e., depending on an arbiter's decision). See [ARBITER](#), [-ARY](#)]

—Related forms

ar·bi·trar·i·ly [ahr-bi-trer-uh-lee, ahr-bi-trair-] [Pronunciation Key](#) -
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ar·bi·trar·i·ness, noun

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ar·bi·trar·y (är'bī-trēr'ē) [Pronunciation Key](#)
adj.

1. Determined by chance, whim, or impulse, and not by necessity, reason, or principle: *stopped at the first motel we passed, an arbitrary choice.*

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2. Based on or subject to individual judgment or preference: *The diet imposes overall calorie limits, but daily menus are arbitrary.*
3. Established by a court or judge rather than by a specific law or statute: *an arbitrary penalty.*
4. Not limited by law; despotic: *the arbitrary rule of a dictator.*

[Middle English *arbitrarie*, from Latin *arbitrarius*, from *arbiter*, *arbitr-*, *arbiter*; see *arbiter*.]

ar'bi·trar'i·ly (-trâr'ə-lē) *adv.*, ar'bi·trar'i·ness *n.*

Synonyms: These adjectives mean determined by or arising from whim or caprice rather than judgment or reason: *an arbitrary decision; a capricious refusal; a whimsical remark.*

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arbitrary

1424 (in *arbitrament*), "deciding by one's own discretion," from L. *arbitrarius*, from *arbiter* (see *arbiter*). The original meaning gradually descended to "capricious" (1646) and "despotic" (1642).

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arbitrary

adjective

based on or subject to individual discretion or preference or sometimes impulse or caprice; "an arbitrary decision"; "the arbitrary rule of a dictator"; "an arbitrary penalty"; "of arbitrary size and shape"; "an arbitrary choice"; "arbitrary division of the group into halves" [ant: *nonarbitrary*]

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arbitrary ['a: bitrəri] *adjective*

not decided by rules or laws but by a person's own opinion

Example: *He made a rather arbitrary decision to close the local cinema without consulting other people.*

Arabic: اعتباطي، تحكّمي	Japanese: 随意の
Chinese (Simplified): 任意的	Korean: 제멋대로의, 독단적인
Chinese (Traditional): 武斷的, 任意的	Latvian: patvaļīgs
Czech: svévolný	Lithuanian: savavališkas
Danish: vilkårlig; arbitrær	Norwegian: vilkårlig; egenrådlig
Dutch: willekeurig	Polish: arbitralny
Estonian: omavõlliline	Portuguese (Brazil): arbitrário
Finnish: mielivaltainen	Portuguese (Portugal): arbitrário
French: arbitraire	
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<i>Greek:</i> αὐθαίρετος	<i>Romanian:</i> arbitrar
<i>Hungarian:</i> önkényes	<i>Russian:</i> произвольный
<i>Icelandic:</i> geðþóttalegur, geðþóttá-	<i>Slovak:</i> svojvol'ný
<i>Indonesian:</i> keputusan sendiri	<i>Slovenian:</i> samovoljen
<i>Italian:</i> arbitrario	<i>Spanish:</i> arbitrario
	<i>Swedish:</i> godtycklig, egenmäktig
	<i>Turkish:</i> keyfi

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Main Entry: **ar·bi·trary**

Pronunciation: ˈär-bĭ-ˈtrēr-ē

Function: *adjective*

1 : depending on individual discretion (as of a judge) and not fixed by standards, rules, or law <the manner of punishment is *arbitrary*>

2 a : not restrained or limited in the exercise of power <an *arbitrary* government> b : marked by or resulting from the unrestrained exercise of power <protection from *arbitrary* arrest and detention>

3 a : based on preference, bias, prejudice, or convenience rather than on reason or fact <an *arbitrary* standard> <different provisions for the married and the unmarried were irrational and *arbitrary* —K. A. Cohen> b : existing or coming about seemingly at random or by chance or as an unreasonable act of individual will without regard for facts or applicable law —often used in the phrase *arbitrary and capricious* <an agency finding or conclusion of lack of evidence would be *arbitrary* and capricious if the record afforded no substantial basis for such a finding —*Irvin v. Hobby*, 131 Federal Reporter Supp. 851 (1955)>

NOTE: Under section 706 of the Administrative Procedure Act, a court shall set aside an agency's action, findings, or conclusions determined upon review to be arbitrary.

—ar·bi·trar·i·ly /ˈär-bĭ-ˈtrēr-ē-lē/ *adverb* —ar·bi·trar·i·ness

/ˈär-bĭ-ˈtrēr-ē-nəs/ *noun*

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